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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, November 13, 1935

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "HONEY AND CAKE-MAKING." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, and the Bureau of Entomology, United States Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

The reasons that I'm going to talk about honey today are two. First, this happens to be National Honey Week when every housewife should have a chance to refresh her memory on the best ways to use this natural sweet from flowers. And, second, this is the time of year when many people are thinking about making holiday cakes, or cookies, or other Thanksgiving and Christmas sweets, which are especially good made with honey.

Now, the 1935 crop of honey is probably the smallest in many years. It may not exceed 140,000 pounds -- a small amount indeed when you consider that the bees of these United States often given us anywhere from 160 to 215 million pounds a year. So, if your family has a sweet tooth and likes the flavor of honey, you'll want to use it to the best advantage.

You can now buy honey in several different forms. You can buy it as it comes from the hive in the comb section with a wooden frame. Or you can buy cut pieces of the comb on sale as "chunk honey" or "bulk comb". These are pieces of comb honey with liquid honey poured over them, put up in glass jars or tin pails. Then, you can buy crystallized or granulated honey. But by far the most popular form is the extracted or liquid honey strained from the comb. Of course, this is the convenient form to use in cooking.

Since honey takes its flavor from the flowers, the kinds are as numerous as the flowers visited by the bees. You have a wide choice. You may prefer the pale clover honey with its delicate flavor. Or you may prefer the darker colored and richer flavored buckwheat honey, or any of the other kinds on the market. Flavor is no test of quality. It all depends on your own personal taste. Just remember that the pale honeys are mild and the darker varieties have a stronger richer taste.

But let's get back to cakes made with honey. Many very old feast cakes used honey as the sweetening. Before people had sugar in Europe, they used honey almost exclusively as sweetening. One of the most famous of all German cakes -- lebkucken, contains honey. And the fine old Scandanavian and Italian holiday cakes also had honey as a chief ingredient.

Well, honey has certain qualities that make it an ideal sweet for holiday cakes, especially those you make some time in advance. A concentrated sweet like honey helps preserve the cake that must stand for some time. Then, the



special honey flavor adds to the rich blended taste the cake takes on as it stands. But, most important of all, is the quality honey has of absorbing moisture, which helps keep the cake from drying out.

You see, honey contains a fruit sugar which the scientists call levulose. And levulose absorbs moisture -- will even take up dampness from the air around it. In cooking, this is sometimes an advantage and sometimes quite the contrary-- a point to consider before you use honey in any recipe. If you're making a fruit cake, or plum pudding, or any other steamed pudding, or if you're making soft cookies, honey is a most helpful ingredient. But if you're making ginger snaps, or other crisp cookies, boiled frosting for cake, or hard candy, honey has its disadvantages. It soon causes them to become soft or sticky.

Well, as we said, honey is an old, old sweet and cooks have been using it for more than a thousand years. But lately the foods scientists have been investigating how to make the most of it in our modern dishes. And what they've learned should be helpful to anyone who has a sweet tooth or a home supply of honey.

These investigators tell us, for example, that honey differs from sugar in its chemical composition and in the way it behaves when you combine it with other ingredients. So, when you make up a recipe with honey instead of sugar, you'll have different results than you would have with sugar. Again, different kinds of honey even differ among themselves in the results they give. So, if you make up a recipe with one kind of honey, you can't count on the same product if you make it again with another kind.

Another point. When you use honey in a recipe, you'll need to cook at a lower temperature than you would if you used sugar. Two reasons why. First, too much heat will change the flavor of honey. You see, the delicious taste of honey comes from certain volatile oils, which evaporate at a high temperature. Then, at a high temperature the sugar in honey turns to caramel. That means change of flavor and a danger of too rapid browning of your cake. So bake your honey cakes in a moderate oven.

Here's a point the investigators make about mixing a honey cake. They say you put the honey in with the liquid that the recipe calls for. For example, in white cake you mix the honey with the milk. Otherwise, you combine the ingredients just as you would if you were using sugar.

In recipes calling for molasses, such as gingerbread or steamed pudding, you can use honey in place of molasses, measure for measure. They're both sirups, you see, so the consistency is very similar. But honey doesn't contain the acid that molasses does, so, of course, you'll omit the soda in the recipe and use more baking powder. For each quarter teaspoon of soda that you leave out, add 1 teaspoon of baking powder.

If you want to use honey instead of sugar, the change in the recipe is a little more complicated. In this case, you'll reduce the liquid in the recipe because of the water in the honey. If the honey is medium-thick and you substitute it for half the sugar in the cake, you'll need to cut down the liquid one-fourth. If you substitute honey for all the sugar, then, of course, you'll cut down the liquid one-half.

In many recipes, you'll have best results by using honey for only part of the sugar. This will give you the honey flavor and the moisture-keeping qualities, but won't take so much of your honey supply.

